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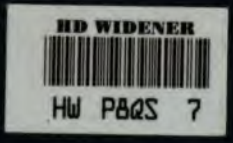
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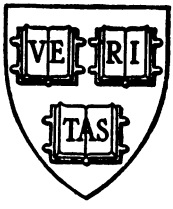
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FROM

Miss Helen Weil

BY THE SAME WRITER:

PROSE

THE SECRET ROSE
THE CELTIC TWILIGHT
IDEAS OF GOOD AND EVIL

VERSE

POEMS
THE WIND AMONG THE REEDS
THE SHADOWY WATERS
IN THE SEVEN WOODS

PLAYS FOR AN IRISH THEATRE

VOLUME II

THE HOUR-GLASS AND OTHER PLAYS


The
Co.

THE HOUR-GLASS

AND OTHER PLAYS

BEING VOLUME TWO OF PLAYS FOR AN IRISH THEATRE

BY

W. B. YEATS

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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"The Hour-Glass," first performance, Dublin, March, 1903. "Cathleen Ni Hoolihan," first performance, Dublin, October, 1902. "A Pot of Broth," first performance, Dublin, October, 1902. These plays were performed by The Irish National Theatre Society, which has repeated them in London, Dublin, and other places.

THE HOUR-GLASS

Dramatis Personæ

A Wise Man — Some Pupils
A Fool — An Angel
The Wise Man's Wife and Two Children

THE HOUR-GLASS

A MORALITY

SCENE: *A large room with a door at the back and another at the side opening to an inner room. A desk and a chair in the middle. An hour-glass on a bracket near the door. A creepy stool near it. Some benches. The wise man sitting at his desk.*

WISE MAN [*turning over the pages of a book*]. Where is that passage I am to explain to my pupils to-day? Here

it is, and the book says that it was written by a beggar on the walls of Babylon: "There are two living countries, the one visible and the one invisible; and when it is winter with us it is summer in that country; and when the November winds are up among us it is lambing-time there." I wish that my pupils had asked me to explain any other passage, for this is a hard passage. [*The* FOOL *comes in and stands at the door, holding out his hat. He has a pair of shears in the other hand.*] It sounds to me like foolishness; and yet that cannot be, for the writer of this book, where I have found so much knowledge, would not

have set it by itself on this page, and surrounded it with so many images and so many deep colours and so much fine gilding, if it had been foolishness.

FOOL. Give me a penny.

WISE MAN [*turns to another page*]. Here he has written: "The learned in old times forgot the visible country." That I understand, but I have taught my learners better.

FOOL. Won't you give me a penny?

WISE MAN. What do you want? The words of the wise Saracen will not teach you much.

FOOL. Such a great wise teacher as you are will not refuse a penny to a Fool.

WISE MAN. What do you know about wisdom?

FOOL. Oh, I know! I know what I have seen.

WISE MAN. What is it you have seen?

FOOL. When I went by Kilcluan where the bells used to be ringing at the break of every day, I could hear nothing but the people snoring in their houses. When I went by Tubbervanach where the young men used to be climbing the hill to the blessed well, they were sitting at the cross-roads playing cards. When I went by Carrigoras where the friars used to be fasting and serving the poor, I

saw them drinking wine and obeying their wives. And when I asked what misfortune had brought all these changes, they said it was no misfortune, but it was the wisdom they had learned from your teaching.

WISE MAN. Run round to the kitchen, and my wife will give you something to eat.

FOOL. That is foolish advice for a wise man to give.

WISE MAN. Why, Fool?

FOOL. What is eaten is gone. I want pennies for my bag. I must buy bacon in the shops, and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time when the sun is weak. And I want

snares to catch the rabbits and the squirrels and the hares, and a pot to cook them in.

WISE MAN. Go away. I have other things to think of now than giving you pennies.

FOOL. Give me a penny and I will bring you luck. Bresal the Fisherman lets me sleep among the nets in his loft in the winter-time because he says I bring him luck; and in the summer-time the wild creatures let me sleep near their nests and their holes. It is lucky even to look at me or to touch me, but it is much more lucky to give me a penny. [*Holds out his hand.*] If I wasn't lucky, I'd starve.

WISE MAN. What have you got the shears for?

FOOL. I won't tell you. If I told you, you would drive them away.

WISE MAN. Whom would I drive away?

FOOL. I won't tell you.

WISE MAN. Not if I give you a penny?

FOOL. No.

WISE MAN. Not if I give you two pennies?

FOOL. You will be very lucky if you give me two pennies, but I won't tell you.

WISE MAN. Three pennies?

FOOL. Four, and I will tell you!

WISE MAN. Very well, four. But I will not call you Teigue the Fool any longer.

FOOL. Let me come close to you where nobody will hear me. But first you must promise you will not drive them away. [WISE MAN *nods.*] Every day men go out dressed in black and spread great black nets over the hills, great black nets.

WISE MAN. Why do they do that?

FOOL. That they may catch the feet of the angels. But every morning, just before the dawn, I go out and cut the nets with my shears, and the angels fly away.

WISE MAN. Ah, now I know that you are Teigue the Fool. You have

told me that I am wise, and I have never seen an angel.

FOOL. I have seen plenty of angels.

WISE MAN. Do you bring luck to the angels too?

FOOL. Oh, no, no! No one could do that. But they are always there if one looks about one; they are like the blades of grass.

WISE MAN. When do you see them?

FOOL. When one gets quiet; then something wakes up inside one, something happy and quiet like the stars — not like the seven that move, but like the fixed stars. [*He points upward.*]

WISE MAN. And what happens then?

FOOL. Then all in a minute one smells summer flowers, and tall people go by, happy and laughing, and their clothes are the colour of burning sods.

WISE MAN. Is it long since you have seen them, Teigue the Fool?

FOOL. Not long, glory be to God! I saw one coming behind me just now. It was not laughing, but it had clothes the colour of burning sods, and there was something shining about its head.

WISE MAN. Well, there are your four pennies. You, a fool, say "Glory be to God," but before I came the wise men said it. Run away now. I must ring the bell for my scholars.

FOOL. Four pennies! That means a great deal of luck. Great teacher, I have brought you plenty of luck! [*He goes out shaking the bag.*]

WISE MAN. Though they call him Teigue the Fool, he is not more foolish than everybody used to be, with their dreams and their preachings and their three worlds; but I have overthrown their three worlds with the seven sciences. [*He touches the books with his hands.*] With Philosophy that was made for the lonely star, I have taught them to forget Theology; with Architecture, I have hidden the ramparts of their cloudy heaven; with Music, the fierce planets' daughter

whose hair is always on fire, and with Grammar that is the moon's daughter, I have shut their ears to the imaginary harpings and speech of the angels; and I have made formations of battle with Arithmetic that have put the hosts of heaven to the rout. But, Rhetoric and Dialectic, that have been born out of the light star and out of the amorous star, you have been my spearman and my catapult! Oh! my swift horsemen! Oh! my keen darting arguments, it is because of you that I have overthrown the hosts of foolishness! [*An* ANGEL, *in a dress the colour of embers, and carrying a blossoming apple bough in his hand and with a gilded*

halo about his head, stands upon the threshold.] Before I came, men's minds were stuffed with folly about a heaven where birds sang the hours, and about angels that came and stood upon men's thresholds. But I have locked the visions into heaven and turned the key upon them. Well, I must consider this passage about the two countries. My mother used to say something of the kind. She would say that when our bodies sleep our souls awake, and that whatever withers here ripens yonder, and that harvests are snatched from us that they may feed invisible people. But the meaning of the book must be different, for only fools and

women have thoughts like that; their thoughts were never written upon the walls of Babylon. [*He sees the* ANGEL.] What are you? Who are you? I think I saw some that were like you in my dreams when I was a child—that bright thing, that dress that is the colour of embers! But I have done with dreams, I have done with dreams.

ANGEL. I am the Angel of the Most High God.

WISE MAN. Why have you come to me?

ANGEL. I have brought you a message.

WISE MAN. What message have you got for me?

ANGEL. You will die within the hour. You will die when the last grains have fallen in this glass. [*He turns the hour-glass.*]

WISE MAN. My time to die has not come. I have my pupils. I have a young wife and children that I cannot leave. Why must I die?

ANGEL. You must die because no souls have passed over the threshold of heaven since you came into this country. The threshold is grassy, and the gates are rusty, and the angels that keep watch there are lonely.

WISE MAN. Where will death bring me to?

ANGEL. The doors of heaven will

not open to you, for you have denied the existence of heaven; and the doors of purgatory will not open to you, for you have denied the existence of purgatory.

WISE MAN. But I have also denied the existence of hell!

ANGEL. Hell is the place of those who deny.

WISE MAN [*kneels*]. I have indeed denied everything and have taught others to deny. I have believed in nothing but what my senses told me. But, oh! beautiful Angel, forgive me, forgive me!

ANGEL. You should have asked forgiveness long ago.

WISE MAN. Had I seen your face

as I see it now, oh! beautiful Angel, I would have believed, I would have asked forgiveness. Maybe you do not know how easy it is to doubt. Storm, death, the grass rotting, many sicknesses, those are the messengers that came to me. Oh! why are you silent? You carry the pardon of the Most High; give it to me! I would kiss your hands if I were not afraid — no, no, the hem of your dress!

ANGEL. You let go undying hands too long ago to take hold of them now.

WISE MAN. You cannot understand. You live in that country people only see in their dreams. You live in a country that we can only dream about.

Maybe it is as hard for you to understand why we disbelieve as it is for us to believe. Oh! what have I said! You know everything! Give me time to undo what I have done. Give me a year — a month — a day — an hour! Give me to this hour's end, that I may undo what I have done!

ANGEL. You cannot undo what you have done. Yet I have this power with my message. If you can find one that believes before the hour's end, you shall come to heaven after the years of purgatory. For, from one fiery seed, watched over by those that sent me, the harvest can come again to heap the golden threshing-floor. But now

farewell, for I am weary of the weight of time.

WISE MAN. Blessed be the Father, blessed be the Son, blessed be the Spirit, blessed be the Messenger They have sent!

ANGEL [*at the door and pointing at the hour-glass*]. In a little while the uppermost glass will be empty. [*Goes out.*]

WISE MAN. Everything will be well with me. I will call my pupils; they only say they doubt. [*Pulls the bell.*] They will be here in a moment. I hear their feet outside on the path. They want to please me; they pretend that they disbelieve. Belief is too old to be overcome all in a minute. Be-

sides, I can prove what I once disproved. [*Another pull at the bell.*] They are coming now. I will go to my desk. I will speak quietly, as if nothing had happened. [*He stands at the desk with a fixed look in his eyes.*]

Enter PUPILS *and the* FOOL.

FOOL. Leave me alone. Leave me alone. Who is that pulling at my bag? King's son, do not pull at my bag.

A YOUNG MAN. Did your friends the angels give you that bag? Why don't they fill your bag for you?

FOOL. Give me pennies! Give me some pennies!

A YOUNG MAN. Let go his cloak, it is coming to pieces. What do you

want pennies for, with that great bag at your waist?

FOOL. I want to buy bacon in the shops, and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time when the sun is weak, and snares to catch rabbits and the squirrels that steal the nuts, and hares, and a great pot to cook them in.

A YOUNG MAN. Why don't your friends tell you where buried treasures are?

ANOTHER. Why don't they make you dream about treasures? If one dreams three times, there is always treasure.

FOOL [*holding out his hat*]. Give me pennies! Give me pennies!

They throw pennies into his hat. He is standing close to the door, that he may hold out his hat to each newcomer.

A YOUNG MAN. Master, will you have Teigue the Fool for a scholar?

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN. Teigue, will you give us your pennies if we teach you lessons? No, he goes to school for nothing on the mountains. Tell us what you learn on the mountains, Teigue?

WISE MAN. Be silent all. [*He has been standing silent, looking away.*] Stand still in your places, for there is something I would have you tell me.

A moment's pause. They all stand

round in their places. Teigue still stands at the door.

WISE MAN. Is there anyone amongst you who believes in God? In heaven? Or in purgatory? Or in hell?

ALL THE YOUNG MEN. No one, Master! No one!

WISE MAN. I knew you would all say that; but do not be afraid. I will not be angry. Tell me the truth. Do you not believe?

A YOUNG MAN. We once did, but you have taught us to know better.

WISE MAN. Oh! teaching, teaching does not go very deep! The heart remains unchanged under it all. You

believe just as you always did, and you are afraid to tell me.

A YOUNG MAN. No, no, Master.

WISE MAN. If you tell me that you believe I shall be glad and not angry.

A YOUNG MAN [*to his neighbour*]. He wants somebody to dispute with.

HIS NEIGHBOUR. I knew that from the beginning.

A YOUNG MAN. That is not the subject for to-day; you were going to talk about the words the beggar wrote upon the walls of Babylon.

WISE MAN. If there is one amongst you that believes, he will be my best friend. Surely there is one amongst

you. [*They are all silent.*] Surely what you learned at your mother's knees has not been so soon forgotten.

A YOUNG MAN. Master, till you came, no teacher in this land was able to get rid of foolishness and ignorance. But every one has listened to you, every one has learned the truth. You have had your last disputation.

ANOTHER. What a fool you made of that monk in the market-place! He had not a word to say.

WISE MAN [*comes from his desk and stands among them in the middle of the room*]. Pupils, dear friends, I have deceived you all this time. It was I myself who was ignorant. There is a

God. There is a heaven. There is fire that passes, and there is fire that lasts for ever.

Teigue, through all this, is sitting on a stool by the door, reckoning on his fingers what he will buy with his money.

A YOUNG MAN [*to another*]. He will not be satisfied till we dispute with him. [*To the* WISE MAN] Prove it, Master. Have you seen them?

WISE MAN [*in a low, solemn voice*]. Just now, before you came in, some one came to the door, and when I looked up I saw an angel standing there.

A YOUNG MAN. You were in a dream. Anybody can see an angel in his dreams.

WISE MAN. Oh, my God! It was not a dream. I was awake, waking as I am now. I tell you I was awake as I am now.

A YOUNG MAN. Some dream when they are awake, but they are the crazy, and who would believe what they say? Forgive me, Master, but that is what you taught me to say. That is what you said to the monk when he spoke of the visions of the saints and the martyrs.

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN. You see how well we remember your teaching.

WISE MAN. Out, out from my sight! I want some one with belief. I must find that grain the Angel spoke

of before I die. I tell you I must find it, and you answer me with arguments. Out with you, or I will beat you with my stick! [*The young men laugh.*]

A YOUNG MAN. How well he plays at faith! He is like the monk when he had nothing more to say.

WISE MAN. Out, out, or I will lay this stick about your shoulders! Out with you, though you are a King's son! [*They begin to hurry out.*]

A YOUNG MAN. Come, come; he wants us to find some one who will dispute with him. [*All go out.*]

WISE MAN. [*Alone. He goes to the door at the side.*] I will call my wife. She will believe; women always be-

lieve. [*He opens the door and calls.*] Bridget! Bridget! [BRIDGET *comes in wearing her apron, her sleeves turned up from her floury arms.*] Bridget, tell me the truth; do not say what you think will please me. Do you sometimes say your prayers?

BRIDGET. Prayers! No, you taught me to leave them off long ago. At first I was sorry, but I am glad now, for I am sleepy in the evenings.

WISE MAN. But do you not believe in God?

BRIDGET. Oh, a good wife only believes what her husband tells her!

WISE MAN. But sometimes when you are alone, when I am in the school

and the children asleep, do you not think about the saints, about the things you used to believe in? What do you think of when you are alone?

BRIDGET [*considering*]. I think about nothing. Sometimes I wonder if the pig is fattening well, or I go out to see if the crows are picking up the chickens' food.

WISE MAN. Oh, what can I do! Is there nobody who believes? I must go and find somebody! [*He goes toward the door but stops with his eyes fixed on the hour-glass.*] I cannot go out; I cannot leave that!

BRIDGET. You want somebody to get up an argument with.

WISE MAN. Oh, look out of the door and tell me if there is anybody there in the street. I cannot leave this glass; somebody might shake it! Then the sand would fall more quickly.

BRIDGET. I don't understand what you are saying. [*Looks out.*] There is a great crowd of people talking to your pupils.

WISE MAN. Oh, run out, Bridget, and see if they have found somebody that believes!

BRIDGET [*wiping her arms in her apron and pulling down her sleeves*]. It's a hard thing to be married to a man of learning that must be always having arguments. [*Goes out and shouts*

through the kitchen door.] Don't be meddling with the bread, children, while I'm out.

WISE MAN [*kneels down*]. "*Salvum me fac, Deus — salvum — salvum. . . .*" I have forgotten it all. It is thirty years since I have said a prayer. I must pray in the common tongue, like a clown begging in the market, like Teigue the Fool! [*He prays.*] Help me, Father, Son, and Spirit!

BRIDGET *enters, followed by the* FOOL, *who is holding out his hat to her.*

FOOL. Give me something; give me a penny to buy bacon in the shops, and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time when the sun grows weak.

BRIDGET. I have no pennies. [*To the* WISE MAN.] Your pupils cannot find anybody to argue with you. There is nobody in the whole country who had enough belief to fill a pipe with since you put down the monk. Can't you be quiet now and not always be wanting to have arguments? It must be terrible to have a mind like that.

WISE MAN. I am lost! I am lost!

BRIDGET. Leave me alone now; I have to make the bread for you and the children.

WISE MAN. Out of this, woman, out of this, I say! [BRIDGET *goes through the kitchen door.*] Will nobody find a way to help me! But she spoke of

my children. I had forgotten them. They will believe. It is only those who have reason that doubt; the young are full of faith. Bridget, Bridget, send my children to me!

BRIDGET [*inside*]. Your father wants you; run to him now. [*The two children come in. They stand together a little way from the threshold of the kitchen door, looking timidly at their father.*]

WISE MAN. Children, what do you believe? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Is there a purgatory?

FIRST CHILD. We haven't forgotten, father.

THE OTHER CHILD. O no, father.

[*They both speak together as if in school.*] There is no heaven; there is no hell; there is nothing we cannot see.

FIRST CHILD. Foolish people used to think that there were, but you are very learned and you have taught us better.

WISE MAN. You are just as bad as the others, just as bad as the others! Out of the room with you, out of the room! [*The children begin to cry and run away.*] Go away, go away! I will teach you better — no, I will never teach you again. Go to your mother — no, she will not be able to teach them. . . . Help them, O God! [*Alone*] The grains are going very quickly. There is very little sand in the uppermost

glass. Somebody will come for me in a moment; perhaps he is at the door now! All creatures that have reason doubt. O that the grass and the planets could speak! Somebody has said that they would wither if they doubted. O speak to me, O grass blades! O fingers of God's certainty, speak to me. You are millions and you will not speak. I dare not know the moment the messenger will come for me. I will cover the glass. [*He covers it and brings it to the desk, and the* FOOL *is sitting by the door fiddling with some flowers which he has stuck in his hat. He has begun to blow a dandelion head.*] What are you doing?

FOOL. Wait a moment. [*He blows.*] Four, five, six.

WISE MAN. What are you doing that for?

FOOL. I am blowing at the dandelion to find out what time it is.

WISE MAN. You have heard everything! That is why you want to find out what hour it is! You are waiting to see them coming through the door to carry me away. [FOOL *goes on blowing.*] Out through the door with you! I will have no one here when they come. [*He seizes the* FOOL *by the shoulders, and begins to force him out through the door, then suddenly changes his mind.*] No, I have something to ask you. [*He*

drags him back into the room.] Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Is there a purgatory?

FOOL. So you ask me now. I thought when you were asking your pupils, I said to myself, if he would ask Teigue the Fool, Teigue could tell him all about it, for Teigue has learned all about it when he has been cutting the nets.

WISE MAN. Tell me; tell me!

FOOL. I said, Teigue knows everything. Not even the owls and the hares that milk the cows have Teigue's wisdom. But Teigue will not speak; he says nothing.

WISE MAN. Tell me, tell me! For

under the cover the grains are falling, and when they are all fallen I shall die; and my soul will be lost if I have not found somebody that believes! Speak, speak!

FOOL [*looking wise*]. No, no, I won't tell you what is in my mind, and I won't tell you what is in my bag. You might steal away my thoughts. I met a bodach on the road yesterday, and he said, "Teigue, tell me how many pennies are in your bag. I will wager three pennies that there are not twenty pennies in your bag; let me put in my hand and count them." But I pulled the strings tighter, like this; and when I go to

sleep every night I hide the bag where no one knows.

WISE MAN [*goes toward the hour-glass as if to uncover it*]. No, no, I have not the courage! [*He kneels.*] Have pity upon me, Fool, and tell me!

FOOL. Ah! Now, that is different. I am not afraid of you now. But I must come near you; somebody in there might hear what the Angel said.

WISE MAN. Oh, what did the Angel tell you?

FOOL. Once I was alone on the hills, and an Angel came by and he said, "Teigue the Fool, do not forget

the Three Fires: the Fire that punishes, the Fire that purifies, and the Fire wherein the soul rejoices for ever!"

WISE MAN. He believes! I am saved! Help me. The sand has run out. I am dying. . . . [FOOL *helps him to his chair.*] I am going from the country of the seven wandering stars, and I am going to the country of the fixed stars! Ring the bell. [FOOL *rings the bell.*] Are they coming? Ah! now I hear their feet. . . . I will speak to them. I understand it all now. One sinks in on God; we do not see the truth; God sees the truth in us. I cannot speak, I am too weak. Tell them, Fool, that when the life

and the mind are broken, the truth comes through them like peas through a broken peascod. But no, I will pray — yet I cannot pray. Pray, Fool, that they may be given a sign and save their souls alive. Your prayers are better than mine.

FOOL *bows his head.* WISE MAN'S *head sinks on his arm on the books.* PUPILS *enter.*

A YOUNG MAN. Look at the Fool turned bell-ringer!

ANOTHER. What have you called us in for, Teigue? What are you going to tell us?

ANOTHER. No wonder he has had dreams! See, he is fast asleep now.

[*Goes over and touches the* WISE MAN.] Oh, he is dead!

FOOL. Do not stir! He asked for a sign that you might be saved. [*All are silent for a moment.*] Look what has come from ~~his mouth~~ . . . a little winged thing . . . a little shining thing. It has gone to the door. [*The* ANGEL *appears in the doorway, stretches out her hands and closes them again.*] The Angel has taken ~~it in~~ her hands . . . she will open her hands in the Garden of Paradise. [*They all kneel.*]

CURTAIN

CATHLEEN NI HOOLIHAN

Persons

Peter Gillane

Michael Gillane. — *His son, going to be married*

Patrick Gillane. — *A lad of twelve,* Michael's *brother*

Bridget Gillane. — *Peter's wife*

Delia Cahel. — *Engaged to* Michael

The Poor Old Woman

Neighbours

CATHLEEN NI HOOLIHAN

SCENE: *Interior of a cottage close to Killala, in* 1798. BRIDGET *is standing at a table undoing a parcel.* PETER *is sitting at one side of the fire,* PATRICK *at the other.*

PETER. What is that sound I hear?

PATRICK. I don't hear anything. [*He listens.*] I hear it now. It's like cheering. [*He goes to the window and looks out.*] I wonder what they are cheering about. I don't see anybody.

PETER. It might be a hurling match.

PATRICK. There's no hurling to-day. It must be down in the town the cheering is.

BRIDGET. I suppose the boys must be having some sport of their own. Come over here, Peter, and look at Michael's wedding clothes.

PETER [*shifts his chair to table*]. Those are grand clothes, indeed.

BRIDGET. You hadn't clothes like that when you married me, and no coat to put on of a Sunday more than any other day.

PETER. That is true, indeed. We never thought a son of our own would be wearing a suit of that sort at his wedding, or have so good a place to bring a wife to.

PATRICK [*who is still at the window*]. There is an old woman coming down the road. I don't know is it here she's coming.

BRIDGET. It will be a neighbour coming to hear about Michael's wedding. Can you see who it is?

PATRICK. I think it is a stranger, and she's not coming to the house. She has not turned up the path. She's turned into the gap that goes down where Maurteen and his sons are shearing sheep. [*He turns towards them.*] Do you remember what Winnie of the Cross Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country the time there's war or trouble coming?

BRIDGET. Don't be bothering us about Winnie's talk but go and open the door for your brother. I hear him coming up the path.

PETER. I hope he has brought Delia's fortune with him safe, for fear her people might go back of the bargain, and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it. [PATRICK *opens the door, and* MICHAEL *comes in.*]

BRIDGET. What kept you, Michael? We were looking out for you this long time.

MICHAEL. I went round by the priest's house to bid him be ready to marry us to-morrow.

BRIDGET. Did he say anything?

MICHAEL. He said it was a very nice match, and that he was never better pleased to marry any two in his parish than myself and Delia Cahel.

PETER. Have you got the fortune, Michael?

MICHAEL. Here it is. [*He puts bag on the table and goes over and leans against chimney jamb.*]

BRIDGET, *who has been all this time examining the clothes, pulling the seams, and trying the lining of the pockets, etc., puts the clothes on the dresser.*

PETER [*getting up and taking the bag in his hand and turning out the money*]. Yes, I made the bargain well for you, Michael. Old John Cahel would sooner

have kept a share of this a while longer. "Let me keep the half of it till the first boy is born," says he. "You will not," says I. "Whether there is or is not a boy, the whole hundred pounds must be in Michael's hands before he brings your daughter to the house." The wife spoke to him then, and he gave in at the end.

BRIDGET. You seem well pleased to be handling the money, Peter.

PETER. Indeed, I wish I'd had the luck to get a hundred pounds, or twenty pounds itself, with the wife I married.

BRIDGET. Well, if I didn't bring much, I didn't get much. What had

you the day I married you but a flock of hens and you feeding them, and a few lambs and you driving them to the market at Ballina? [*She is vexed, and bangs a jug on the dresser.*] If I brought no fortune I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby — Michael, that is standing there now — on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asking big dresses or anything but to be working.

PETER. That is true, indeed. [*He pats her arm.*]

BRIDGET. Leave me alone now till I ready the house for the woman that is to come into it.

PETER. You are the best woman in

Ireland, but money is good, too. [*He begins handling the money again and sits down.*] I never thought to see so much money within my four walls. We can do great things now we have it. We can take the ten acres of land we have a chance of since Jamsie Dempsey died, and stock it. We will go to the fair of Ballina to buy the stock. Did Delia ask any of the money for her own use, Michael?

MICHAEL. She did not, indeed. She did not seem to take much notice of it, or to look at it at all.

BRIDGET. That's no wonder. Why would she look at it when she had yourself to look at — a fine strong

young man. It is proud she must be to get you — a good, steady boy, that will make use of the money, and will not be running through it, or spending it on drink, like another.

PETER. It's likely Michael himself was not thinking much of the fortune either, but of what sort the girl was to look at.

MICHAEL [*coming over toward the table*]. Well, you would like a nice comely girl to be beside you, and to go walking with you. The fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always.

PATRICK [*turning round from the window*]. They are cheering again

down in the town. Maybe they are landing horses from Enniscrone. They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.

MICHAEL. There are no horses in it. Where would they be going and no fair at hand? Go down to the town, Patrick, and see what is going on.

PATRICK [*opens the door to go out, but stops for a moment on the threshold*]. Will Delia remember, do you think, to bring the greyhound pup she promised me when she would be coming to the house?

MICHAEL. She will, surely. [PATRICK *goes out, leaving the door open.*]

PETER. It will be Patrick's turn

next to be looking for a fortune, but he won't find it so easy to get it, and he with no place of his own.

BRIDGET. I do be thinking sometimes, now things are going so well with us, and the Cahels such a good back to us in the district, and Delia's own uncle a priest, we might be put in the way of making Patrick himself a priest some day, and he so good at his books.

PETER. Time enough, time enough; you have always your head full of plans.

BRIDGET. We will be well able to give him learning, and not to send him tramping the country like a poor scholar that lives on charity.

MICHAEL. They're not done cheering yet. [*He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his hand to shade his eyes.*]

BRIDGET. Do you see anything?

MICHAEL. I see an old woman coming up the path.

BRIDGET. Who is it, I wonder?

MICHAEL. I don't think it's one of the neighbours, but she has her cloak over her face.

BRIDGET. Maybe it's the same woman Patrick saw a while ago. It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding, and came to look for her share.

PETER. I may as well put the

money out of sight. There's no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at. [*He goes over to a large box by the wall, opens it and puts the bag in, and fumbles with the lock.*]

MICHAEL. There she is, father! [*An* OLD WOMAN *passes the window slowly. She looks at* MICHAEL *as she passes.*] I'd sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before the wedding.

BRIDGET. Open the door, Michael; don't keep the poor woman waiting. [*The* OLD WOMAN *comes in;* MICHAEL *stands aside to make way for her.*]

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. God save all here!

PETER. God save you kindly.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. You have good shelter here.

PETER. You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

BRIDGET. Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN [*warming her hands*]. There's a hard wind outside.

MICHAEL *watches her curiously from the door.* PETER *comes over to the table.*

PETER. Have you travelled far to-day?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself.

PETER. It is a pity, indeed, for any person to have no place of their own.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. That is true for you indeed, and it is long I am on the road since I first went wandering. It is seldom I have any rest.

BRIDGET. It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me, and that all the stir has gone out of me.

BRIDGET. What was it put you astray?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Too many strangers in the house.

BRIDGET. Indeed you look as if you had had your share of trouble.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I have had trouble indeed.

BRIDGET. What was it put the trouble on you?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. My land that was taken from me.

PETER. Was it much land they took from you?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. My four beautiful green fields.

PETER [*aside to* BRIDGET]. Do you think could she be the Widow Casey that was put out of her holding at Kilglas a while ago?

BRIDGET. She is not. I saw the Widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout, fresh woman.

PETER [*to* OLD WOMAN]. Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming up the hill?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends came to visit me. [*She begins singing half to herself*]

I will go cry with the woman,
For yellow-haired Donough is dead;
With a hempen rope for a neckcloth
And a white cloth on his head.

MICHAEL [*coming from the door*]. What is that you are singing, ma'am?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-haired Donough, that was hanged

in Galway. [*She goes on singing much louder*]

I am come to cry with you, woman,
My hair is unwound and unbound;
I remember him ploughing his field,
Turning up the red side of the ground.

And building his barn on the hill
With the good mortared stone;
O! we'd have pulled down the gallows
Had it happened in Enniscrone!

MICHAEL. What was it brought him to his death?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. He died for love of me; many a man has died for love of me.

PETER [*aside to* BRIDGET]. Her trouble has put her wits astray.

MICHAEL. Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago.

MICHAEL. Were they neighbours of your own, ma'am?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Come here beside me and I'll tell you about them. [MICHAEL *sits down beside her at the hearth.*] There was a red man of the O'Donells from the North, and a man of the O'Sullivans from the South, and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf, by the sea, and there were a great many in the West, some that

died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow.

MICHAEL. Is it in the West that men will die to-morrow?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Come nearer, nearer to me.

BRIDGET. Is she right, do you think? or is she a woman from the North?

PETER. She doesn't know well what she's talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

BRIDGET. The poor thing, we should treat her well.

PETER. Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

BRIDGET. Maybe we should give her something along with that to bring her

on her way — a few pence, or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

PETER. Indeed, I'd not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare; but if we go running through what we have, we'll soon have to break the hundred pounds, and that would be a pity.

BRIDGET. Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling and your blessing with it, or our own luck will go from us.

PETER *goes to the box and takes out a shilling.*

BRIDGET [*to the* OLD WOMAN]. Will you have a drink of milk?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. It is not food or drink that I want.

PETER [*offering the shilling*]. Here is something for you.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. That is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

PETER. What is it you would be asking for?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all. [PETER *goes over to the table, staring at the shilling in his hand in a bewildered way and stands whispering to* BRIDGET.]

MICHAEL. Have you no man of your own, ma'am?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I have not. With all the lovers that brought me

their love, I never set out the bed for any.

MICHAEL. Are you lonely going the roads, ma'am?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

MICHAEL. What hopes have you to hold to?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope of putting the strangers out of my house.

MICHAEL. What way will you do that, ma'am?

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am

not afraid. If they are put down to-day, they will get the upper hand to-morrow. [*She gets up.*] I must be going to meet my friends. They are coming to help me, and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the neighbours together to welcome them.

MICHAEL. I will go with you.

BRIDGET. It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl coming into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do; it is food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house before her. [*To the* OLD

WOMAN] Maybe you don't know, ma'am, that my son is going to be married to-morrow.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.

PETER [*to* BRIDGET]. Who is she, do you think, at all?

BRIDGET. You did not tell us your name yet, ma'am.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call me Cathleen the daughter of Hoolihan.

PETER. I think I knew some one of that name once. Who was it, I wonder? It must have been some one I

knew when I was a boy. No, no, I remember I heard it in a song.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN [*who is standing in the doorway*]. They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning. [*She sings*]

Do not make a great keening
When the graves have been dug to-morrow.
Do not call the white-scarfed riders
To the burying that shall be to-morrow.
Do not spread food to call strangers
To the wakes that shall be to-morrow.
Do not give money for prayers
For the dead that shall die to-morrow.
They will have no need of prayers, they will have no need of prayers.

MICHAEL. I do not know what that song means; but tell me something I can do for you.

PETER. Come over to me, Michael.

MICHAEL. Hush, father; listen to her.

THE POOR OLD WOMAN. It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christen-

ing to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that they will think they are well paid. [*She goes out. Her voice is heard outside singing*]

They shall be remembered for ever
They shall be alive for ever
They shall be speaking for ever
The people shall hear them for ever.

BRIDGET [*to* PETER]. Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man that has got the touch. [*Raising her voice*] Look here, Michael, at the wedding clothes [*taking clothes from dresser*]. You have a right to fit them on now. It would be a pity to-morrow if they did

not fit; the boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on. [*She puts them on his arm.*]

MICHAEL. What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing to-morrow?

BRIDGET. These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel to-morrow.

MICHAEL. I had forgotten that. [*He looks at the clothes and turns toward the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside.*]

PETER. There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened?

Neighbours come crowding in, PATRICK *and* DELIA *with them.*

PATRICK. There are ships in the bay; the French are landing at Killala.

PETER *takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off and stands up. The clothes slip from* MICHAEL'S *arm.*

DELIA. Michael! [*He takes no notice.*] Michael! [*He turns towards her.*] Why do you look at me like a stranger? [*She drops his arm.* BRIDGET *goes over toward her.*]

PATRICK. The boys are all hurrying down the hillsides to meet the French.

DELIA. Michael won't be going to join the French.

BRIDGET [*to* PETER]. Tell him not to go, Peter.

PETER. It's no use. He doesn't hear a word we're saying.

BRIDGET. Try, Delia, and coax him over to the fire.

DELIA. Michael, Michael, you won't leave me! You won't join the French and we going to be married to-morrow! [*She puts her arms about him. He turns to her as if about to yield.*]

OLD WOMAN'S *voice outside* —

They shall be remembered for ever
The people shall hear them for ever.

MICHAEL *breaks away from* DELIA *and goes out.*

BRIDGET [*laying her hand on* PATRICK'S *arm*]. Did you see an old woman going down the path?

PATRICK. I did not, but I saw a young girl and she had the walk of a queen.

A POT OF BROTH

Persons

A Beggarman
John Coneely
Sibby Coneely

A POT OF BROTH

SCENE: *A cottage kitchen. Fire on the hearth. Table with cabbage, a plate of meal, etc. Half-open door.*

BEGGAR [*enters, looks about*]. What sort are the people of this house, I wonder? Was it a good place for me to come to look for my dinner, I wonder? What's in that big pot? [*Lifts cover.*] Nothing at all! What's in the little pot? [*Lifts cover.*] Nothing at all! What's in that bottle, I wonder? [*Takes it up excitedly and*

smells.] Milk! milk in a bottle! I wonder they wouldn't afford a tin can to milk the cow into! What's in that chest? [*Kneels and tries to lift cover.*] Locked! [*Smells at the key-hole.*] There's a good smell there — there must be a still not far off. [*Gets up and sits on chest.*]

A noise heard outside, shouts, footsteps, and a loud frightened cackling.

BEGGAR. What in the earthly world is going on outside? Anyone would think it was the Fiannta Eireann at their hunting!

SIBBY'S VOICE. Stop the gap, let you stop the gap, John! Stop that old schemer of a hen flying up on

the thatch like as if she was an eagle!

JOHN'S VOICE. What can I do, Sibby? I all to had my hand on her when she flew away!

SIBBY'S VOICE. She's out into the garden! Follow after her! She has the wide world before her now!

BEGGAR. "Sibby," he called her. I wonder is it Sibby Coneely's house I am in! If that's so, it's a bad chance I have of going out heavier than I came in! I often heard of her, a regular old slave-driver that would starve the rats! An old niggard with her eyes on kippeens, that would skin a flea for its hide! It was the bad

luck of the world brought me here, and not a house or a village between this and Tubber. And it isn't much I have left to bring me on there. [*Begins emptying out his pockets on the chest.*] There's my pipe, and not a grain to fill it with! There's my handkerchief that I got at the Coronation dinner. There's my knife, and nothing left of it but the handle. [*Shakes the pocket out.*] And there's the crumb of the last dinner I got, and the last I'm likely to get till to-morrow. That's all I have in the world, unless the stone I picked up to peg at that yelping dog a while ago. [*Takes stone out of other pocket and*

tosses it up and down.] In the time long ago I usen't to have much trouble to get a dinner, getting over the old women and getting round the young ones! I remember the time I met the old minister on the path and sold him his own flock of turkeys. My wits used to fill my stomach then, but I'm afraid they're going from me now with all the hardship I went through.

Cackling heard again, and cries.

SIBBY'S VOICE. Catch her, she's round the bush! Put your hand in the nettles, don't be daunted! [*A choked cackle and prolonged screech.*]

BEGGAR. There's a dinner for somebody, anyway! That it may be for

myself! How will I come round her, I wonder? There is no more pity in her heart than there's a soul in a dog. If all the saints were standing there barefoot, she'd bid them to call another day. It's myself I have to trust now, and my share of talk. [*Looks at the stone.*] I know what I'll do; I know what a friend of mine did one time with a stone, and I'm as good a man as he is, anyway. [*He jumps up and waves the stone over his head.*] Now, Sibby! If I don't do it one way, I'll do it another. My wits against the world! [*Sings*]

There's broth in the pot for you, old man,
There's broth in the pot for you, old man,

There's cabbage for me
And broth for you,
And beef for Jack the journeyman.

I wish you were dead, my gay old man,
I wish you were dead, my gay old man,
I wish you were dead,
And a stone at your head,
And I'd marry poor Jack the journeyman.

Voices outside.

JOHN'S VOICE. Bring it in, bring it in, Sibby. You'll be late with the priest's dinner.

SIBBY'S VOICE. Can't you wait a minute till I draw it? [*Enter* JOHN.]

JOHN. I didn't know there was anyone in the house.

BEGGAR. It's only this minute I

came in; tired with the length of the road I am, and fasting since morning.

JOHN [*begins groping among the pots and pans*]. I'll see can I find anything here for you. . . . I don't see much. . . . Maybe there's something in the chest.

He takes key from a hiding-place at the back of the hearth, opens chest, takes out bottle, takes out ham bone and is cutting a bit from it when SIBBY *enters, carrying hen by the neck.*

SIBBY. Hurry, now, John, after all the time you have wasted. Why didn't you steal up on the old hen that time she was scratching in the dust?

JOHN. Sure, I thought one of the chickens would be the tenderest.

SIBBY. Cock you up with tenderness, indeed! All the expense I'm put to! My grand hen I have been feeding these five years! Wouldn't that have been enough to part with? Indeed, I wouldn't have thought of parting with her at all, but she had got tired of laying since Easter.

At sound of her voice JOHN *has dropped ham bone on a bench.*

JOHN. Well, I thought we ought to give his reverence something that would have a little good in it.

SIBBY. What does the age of it matter? A hen's a hen when it's on

the table. [*Sitting down to pluck chicken.*] Why couldn't the Kernans have given the priest his dinner, the way they always do? What did it matter their mother's brother to have died? It is an excuse they had made up to put the expense of the dinner on me.

JOHN. Well, I hope you have a good bit of bacon to put in the pot along with the chicken.

SIBBY. Let me alone, the taste of meat on the knife is all that high-up people like the clergy care for, nice genteel people, no way greedy, like potato diggers or harvest men.

JOHN. Well, I never saw the man

gentle or simple wouldn't be glad of his fill of bacon and he hungry.

SIBBY. Let me alone, I'll show the Kernans what I can do. I have what's better than bacon, a nice bit of a ham I am keeping in the chest this good while, thinking we might want it for company. [*She catches sight of* BEGGAR *and calls out*] Who is there? A beggar-man, is it? Then you may quit this house, if you please; we have nothing for you. [*She gets up and opens door.*]

BEGGAR [*comes forward*]. It is a mistake you are making, ma'am; it is not asking anything I am. It is giving I am more used to. I was never in a

house yet but there would be a welcome for me in it again.

SIBBY. Well, you have the appearance of a beggar, and if it isn't begging you are, what way do you make your living?

BEGGAR. If I was a beggar, ma'am, it is to common people I would be going and not to a nice grand woman like yourself, that is only used to be talking with high-up noble people.

SIBBY. Well, what is it you are asking? If it's a bit to eat you want, I can't give it to you, for I have company coming that will clear all before them.

BEGGAR. Is it me to ask anything

to eat? [*Holds up stone.*] I have here what's better than beef and mutton and currant cakes and sacks of flour.

SIBBY. What is it all?

BEGGAR [*mysteriously*]. Those that gave it to me wouldn't like me to tell that.

SIBBY [*to* JOHN.] Do you think is he a man that has friends among the Sidhe?

JOHN. Your mind is always running on the Sidhe since the time they made John Molloy find buried gold on the bridge of Limerick. I see nothing in it but a stone.

BEGGAR. What can you see in it, you that never saw what it can do?

JOHN. What is it it can do?

BEGGAR. It can do many things, and what it's going to do now is to make me a drop of broth for my dinner.

SIBBY. I'd like to have a stone that could make broth.

BEGGAR. No one in the world but myself has one, ma'am, and no other stone in the world has the same power, for it has enchantment on it. All I'll ask of you now, ma'am, is the loan of a pot with a drop of boiling water in it.

SIBBY. You're welcome to that much. John, fill the small pot with water. [JOHN *fills the pot.*] And I'll

bring out the hen and draw it. [*She goes out.*]

BEGGAR [*putting in stone*]. There now, that's all I have to do but to put it on the fire to boil, and it's a grand pot of broth will be before me then.

SIBBY. And is that all you have to put in it?

BEGGAR. Nothing at all but that, — only maybe a bit of herb, for fear the enchantment might slip away from it. You wouldn't have a bit of the Slanlus in the house, ma'am, that was cut with a black-handled knife?

SIBBY. No, indeed, I have none of that in the house.

BEGGAR. Or a bit of the Faravan that was picked when the wind was from the north?

SIBBY. No, indeed, I'm sorry there's none.

BEGGAR. Or a sprig of the Ahartalav, the father of herbs?

JOHN. There's plenty of it by the hedge. I'll go out and get it for you.

BEGGAR. Oh, don't mind taking so much trouble; those leaves beside me will do well enough. [*He takes a couple of good handfuls of the cabbage and onions and puts them in.*]

SIBBY. But where did you get the stone, at all?

BEGGAR. Well, this is how it happened. I was out one time, and a grand greyhound with me, and it followed a hare, and I went after it. And I came up at last to the edge of a gravel pit where there were a few withered furze bushes, and there was my fine hound sitting up, and it shivering, and a little old man sitting before him, and he taking off a hare-skin coat. [*Looking round at the ham bone*] Give me the loan of a kippeen to stir the pot with. . . . [*He takes the ham bone and puts it into the pot.*]

JOHN. Oh! The ham bone!

BEGGAR. I didn't say a ham bone, I said a hare-skin coat.

SIBBY. Hold your tongue, John, if it's deaf you're getting.

BEGGAR [*stirring the pot with the same ham bone*]. Well, as I was telling you, he was sitting up, and one time I thought he was as small as a nut, and the next minute I thought his head to be in the stars. Frightened I was.

SIBBY. No wonder, no wonder at all in that.

BEGGAR. He took the little stone then — that stone I have with me — out of the side pocket of his coat, and he showed it to me. "Call off your dog," says he, "and I'll give you that stone, and if ever you want a good drop of broth, or a bit of stirabout, or

a drop of poteen itself, all you have to do is to put it down in a pot with a drop of water and stir it a while, and you'll have the thing you were wanting ready before you."

SIBBY. Poteen! Would it make that?

BEGGAR. It would, ma'am; and wine, the same as the Clare Militia uses.

SIBBY. Let me see what does it look like now. [*Is bending forward.*]

BEGGAR. Don't look at it for your life, ma'am. It might bring bad luck on anyone that might look at it, and it boiling. I must put a cover on the pot, or I must colour the water some way. Give me a handful of that meal.

[SIBBY *holds out a plate of meal and he puts in a handful or two.*]

JOHN. Well, he's a gifted man!

SIBBY. It would be a great comfort to have a stone like that. [*She has finished plucking the hen which lies in her lap.*]

BEGGAR. And there's another thing it does, ma'am, since it came into Catholic hands. If you put it into a pot of a Friday with a bit of the whitest meat in Ireland in it, it would turn it as black as black.

SIBBY. That is no less than a miracle; I must tell Father Jones about that.

BEGGAR. But to put a bit of meat with it any other day of the week, it would do it no harm at all, but good.

Look here, now, ma'am, I'll put that nice little chicken you have in your lap in the pot for a minute till you see. [*Takes it and puts it in.*]

JOHN [*sarcastically*]. It's a good job this is not a Friday!

SIBBY. Keep yourself quiet, John, and don't be interrupting the talk, or you'll get a knock on the head like the King of Lochlann's grandmother.

JOHN. Go on, go on, I'll say no more.

BEGGAR. If I'm passing this way some time of a Friday, I'll bring a nice bit of mutton, or the breast of a turkey, and you 'll see how it will be no better in two minutes than a fistful of bog mould.

SIBBY [*getting up*]. Let me take the chicken out now.

BEGGAR. Stop till I help you, ma'am; you might scald your hand. I'll show it to you in a minute as white as your own skin, where the lily and the rose are fighting for mastery. Did you ever hear what the boys in your own parish were singing after you being married from them? — such of them that had any voice at all and not choked with crying, or senseless with the drop of drink they took to comfort them and to keep their wits from going with the loss of you.

[SIBBY *sits down again complacently.*]

SIBBY. Did they do that, indeed?

BEGGAR. They did, ma'am. This is what they used to be singing. [*Sings*]

The spouse of Naoise, Erin's woe,
Helen and Venus long ago,
Their charms would fade, their fame would flee,
Beside mo gradh, mo stor, mo chree,
My Sibby O!

SIBBY *takes a fork and rises to take out the hen.* BEGGAR *puts up his hand to stop her and goes on.*

Her eyes are gray like morning dew,
Her curling hair falls to her shoe,
The swan is blacker than [*looks round for a simile, then at his hand*] my nail,
Beside my queen, my Granuaile,
My Sibby O!

[SIBBY *half rises again.* BEGGARMAN *puts up his hand.*] Wait till you hear to the end. [*Sings*]

The King of France would give his throne
To share her pillow [*what's the rhyme at all*],
So would I myself. . . .

SIBBY *begins to keep time with fork.*

The Spanish fleet is on the sea
To carry away mo gradh, mo chree!
My Sibby O!

SIBBY [*stands up with the fork in her hand and sings to herself*]. "The Spanish fleet is on the sea," etc. [*To* JOHN] I always knew I was too good for you! [*She goes on humming.*]

JOHN. Well, he has the old woman bewitched!

SIBBY [*suddenly coming to her wits*]. Did you take the chicken out yet?

BEGGAR [*taking it out and giving it a good squeeze into the pot*]. I did, ma'am; look at it there. [*She takes it and lays it on table.*]

JOHN. How is the broth getting on?

BEGGAR [*tasting it with a spoon*]. It's grand; it's always grand.

SIBBY. Give me a taste of it.

BEGGAR [*takes the pot off and slips the ham bone behind him*]. Give me some vessel till I give this shy woman a taste of it.

JOHN *gives him an egg cup, which he*

fills and gives to SIBBY. JOHN *gives him a mug, and he fills this for himself, pouring it back and forward from it to a bowl that is on the table, and drinking gulps now and again.* SIBBY *blows at hers and smells it.*

SIBBY. There's a good smell on it, anyway. [*Tasting*] It's lovely. Oh, I'd give the world and all to have the stone that made that!

BEGGAR. The riches of the world wouldn't buy it, ma'am. If I was inclined to sell it, the Lord Lieutenant would have given me Dublin Castle and all that's in it long ago.

SIBBY. Oh! couldn't we coax it out of you any way at all?

BEGGAR [*drinking more soup*]. The whole world wouldn't coax me out of it, except maybe for one thing. [*Looks depressed.*] Now I think of it, there's only one reason I might think of parting with it at all.

SIBBY [*eagerly*]. What reason is that?

BEGGAR. It's a misfortune that overtakes me, ma'am, every time I make an attempt to keep a pot of my own to boil it in, and I don't like to be always under a compliment to the neighbours asking the loan of one. But whatever way it is, I never can keep a pot with me. I had a right to ask one of the little man that gave me the

stone. The last one I bought got the bottom burned out of it one night I was giving a hand to a friend that keeps a still; and the one before that I hid under a bush one time I was going into Ennis for the night, and some boys of the town dreamed about it and went looking for treasure in it, and they found nothing but eggshells, but they brought it away for all that, and another one.

SIBBY. Give me the loan of the stone itself and I'll engage I'll keep a pot for it. . . . Wait now till I make some offer to you.

BEGGAR [*aside*]. I'd best not be stopping to bargain; the priest might

be coming on me. . . . [*Gets up.*] Well, ma'am, I'm sorry I can't oblige you. [*Goes to door, shades his eyes and looks out, turns suddenly.*] I have no time to lose, ma'am; I'm off. [*Comes to table and takes up his hat.*] Well, ma'am, what offer will you make?

JOHN. You might as well leave it for a day on trial, first.

BEGGAR [*to* JOHN]. I think it likely I'll not be passing this way again. [*To* SIBBY] Well, now, ma'am, as you were so kind as for the sake of the good treatment you gave me I'll ask nothing for it at all. Here it is for you and welcome, that you may live long to use it! But I'll just take a

little bit in my bag that'll do for supper to-night, for fear I mightn't be in Tubber before night. [*Takes up the chicken.*] And you won't begrudge me the drop of whiskey when you can make plenty for yourself from this out. [*Takes the bottle.*]

JOHN. You deserve it, you deserve it, indeed. You are a very gifted man. Don't forget the kippeen! [BEGGARMAN *takes the ham bone also and exit.* JOHN *follows him.*]

SIBBY [*looking at the stone in her hand*]. Broth of the best — stirabout — poteen — wine itself, he said! And the people that will be coming to see the miracle! I'll be as rich as Biddy

Early before I die! [JOHN *enters.*] Where were you, John?

JOHN. I just went out to shake him by the hand. He's a very gifted man.

SIBBY. He is so, indeed.

JOHN. And the priest's at the top of the boreen coming for his dinner. Maybe you'd best put the stone in the pot again.

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